## 23-Year-Old Breast Cancer Survivor's Experiences **Guide A National Research Program**

Canadian Institutes of Health Research

Two years ago, Alicia Tait sat in a meeting room with a group of funders and researchers sharing her story of what it's like to be 23 and diagnosed with breast cancer. She hoped they'd have a better experience. Through early detection and screening, Alicia was among the 22,700 Canadian women who were diagnosed with breast cancer in 2012.

Alicia says that her diagnosis was a

teaching, and grow old with my husband? Alicia

dren has since graduated university and completed teacher's college. "A cancer diagnosis at such a young age raises understanding of what women like her conceive another child. These are unique challenges when you're this young."

About 4% of newly diagnosed cases of breast cancer will be in women under 40. Breast cancer in younger women tends to be more advanced at the time of diagnoshock and sent her mind spinning. "I had sis as well as more aggressive and resisa four-month-old daughter," she says. "It tant to treatment. As a result, prognosis is raised the question of if I'd even be around generally worse for this age group. Many to raise my daughter. Would I be able questions remain but there is much hope to graduate university, start a career in for newly diagnosed cancer patients, like were diagnosed with breast cancer in

Would I be able to grow old at all?"

The Canadian Institutes of Health related to recurrence and survival. In this

The 28-year-old mother of two chil
Research (CIHR) and Canadian Breast largest ever Canadian breast cancer in Cancer Foundation (CBCF) are funding a \$5.7M research project to study 1,200 newly diagnosed young women with all many questions about the future," she stages of breast cancer receiving care in through their breast cancer journey. says. "You worry whether you'll be able to 28 institutions across Canada. Led by Dr. Breast cancer continues to be Steven Narod, Canada Research Chair in Breast Cancer at Women's College Hospital in Toronto, the research teams across Canada aim to better understand the unique biology of breast cancer in women under 40 and its implications for and wellbeing and this project will result in prevention, risk reduction, and delivering care that addresses their distinct needs.

The researchers will also assemble a database of 3,000 young women who

order to assess long term outcomes young women research program, women like Alicia will also gain a network that will provide them with additional support

Breast cancer continues to be the most common cancer among Canadian women (excluding non-melanoma skin cancers) and is the second leading cause of death from cancer. Research efforts play an important role in women's health real improvements for the young women who will face this diagnosis.



<u>Billi J. Miller</u> Submitted

June 20, 2007 started out like any other. I arrived at my office with the Govern-

ment of Alberta in Edmonton. Then the news broke: 3 soldiers were killed in Afghanistan.

But, worse? Our dear friend and colleague Sherry Clark hadn't shown up for work that morning.

Her son Joel was there serving. Our hearts sank. Her phone call confirmed about Joel? our fears.

Canadian Light Infantry (PPCLI) that had and feel like they were his best friend. been hit by a roadside bomb.

He died a day before his 23rd birthday, along with: Cpl. Stephen Frederick Bouzane, 26 and Sgt. Christos Karigi-

August 10, 2014, marked the 100-year Anniversary that the PPCLI was incorporated - and just over 7 years since a mother lost her son.

In a recent interview, photojournal-ist Billi J. Miller spoke with Sherry Clark about what it means to lose a son.

What was your son's name and how long did he serve?

Private Joel Vincent Wiebe was part of 3rd Battalion PPCLI, and joined in September, 2004.

Where was he serving when he died? Joel deployed on February 20, 2007 and was killed on June 20 2007 close to SperwanGhar, Kandahar Province, Afghanistan.

How many siblings does Joel have? Joel had 3 sisters and has a nephew and three nieces. He also has two broth-

Church where his funeral was.

What did Joel love the most in life?

Joel loved his family and friends deeply a good prank! and was especially close to his sister Amanda. He loved being at home with Anna. Joel LOVED food (breakfast food!). We used to joke that Joel joined the army for the daily bacon and eggs! has i Joel was proud of the PPCLI. He loved love?

the camaraderie and kinship and wore his uniform proudly.

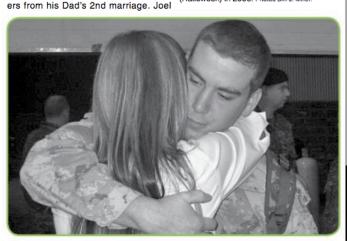
What would you like to remember most

Even though his time on earth was Joel was one of the soldiers from the short, Joel left us with amazing memo-Edmonton-based Princess Patricia's ries! He was kind, and made people laugh

When you were around Joel, you



Joel celebrating one of his favorite holidays (Halloween) in 2006. Photos Billi J. Miller.



Sherry Clark's last hug from her son the night he deployed on February 20, 2007.

## The Call

was engaged to Anna and they were to felt safe, cared for, loved, and you laughed my daughters. be married in February, 2008 at the same a lot! Joel was the glue of our family. He was a very stubborn young man too! He was a practical joker and loved pulling off

> He was one of those people you couldn't get mad at. He is our hero because of the way he lived and served!

> Having been through this loss, what has it taught you about life and about

I have learned that a devastating loss has many emotions - heartache, desperation, emptiness, and shock, but it also brought pride.

I learned we don't always act the way we hope we would. A sad realization I live with now is that immediately following live in Edmonton. Joel's death, I wasn't a very good Mom to

I went through the motions of life but I barely functioned and I couldn't be the parent I should have been for my daugh-

I have learned that as sad as I am for our loss of Joel, I was even sadder for him and all that he would miss out on - his wedding, the chance to become a father.

I have learned that grief is a journey. I don't believe in "closure" and "getting over a loss". I believe you learn how to live with

I feel Joel's presence and there is no doubt that he is still watching over us.

The number of casualties from that mission grew to 158. Sherry continues to

